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ABSTRACT

To examine what freedom is and how it, in its many manifestations, may best be used to thrust journalism into more productive, progressive, and moral directions, this paper surveys the concepts of freedom and press freedom in Western thought from the eighteenth century to the present. After surveying the evolution of the concept of freedom, beginning with Aristotle, the paper examines perspectives on freedom of expression as given by classical defenders of the concept, concentrating especially on British and French Enlightenment spokesmen. Early American perspectives (of Jefferson and others) are surveyed next. The paper then gives an overview of some contemporary viewpoints, followed by a more specific discussion of press freedom as it impinges on journalism and journalistic thinking today. Sixty-three notes are included. (SR)

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FREEDOM AND THE GROWTH OF AN ETHICAL DIMENSION IN JOURNALISM

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FREEDOM AND THE GROWTH OF AN ETHICAL DIMENSION IN JOURNALISM

By John C. Merrill

While the term "freedom" has a wide variety of meanings, there is no doubt that it has a common positive connotation, and certainly in the area of journalism it is looked upon, in whatever society or press system, as something to be valued. As I wrote in a book more than a decade ago, freedom is "essential to authentic journalism, to creative press systems and to expanding, vigorous and self-assured journalists."[1] The problem, however, is determining what freedom is and how it, in its many manifestations, may best be used to thrust journalism into more productive, progressive--and moral--directions.

Before looking at the concept of press freedom specifically, it might be well to survey the evolution of the concept of freedom generally. Then we shall glimpse the perspectives of freedom of expression as given by classical defenders of the concept--concentrating especially on the Enlightenment spokesmen of Europe, after which early American perspectives (of Jefferson and others) will be given. Contemporary viewpoints will then be provided, followed by a more specific discussion of "press freedom" as it impinges on journalism and journalistic thinking today.

The Aristotelian Spirit

Aristotle provides the spirit for the strain of rationalism, individualism, and self-respect--as well as morality--which provides the foundation for American journalistic freedom. He enthroned the concept of self-development or self-enhancement, a kind of intellectual hedonism, and a belief in the mind as an instrument to explore reality and the mysteries of nature. Aristotle is, perhaps, the real father of Nietzsche's Apollo--the god of light and dispassionate scientism. Plato's more mystical spirit (Dionysian, in Nietzsche's terms) was infused somewhat in Aristotle, but was deemphasized. While Plato favored personal adjustment to the collective, a kind of pushing the individual into the social whole, Aristotle stressed the development of individual capacities and self-respect, so dear to the heart of today's American journalist.

After the time of Aristotle the individualistic philosophy he advocated found unfavorable conditions for growth in Europe. It was not until the Renaissance that the Aristotelian spirit exploded in Europe to form what has been properly called the Age of Reason or the Enlightenment.[2] Leonard Peikoff has noted that the results of the rebirth of this Aristotelian spirit included (a) the rise of individualistic political philosophy, (b) the rise of modern science, (c) the spread of freedom across the civilized world, and (d) the birth of the "freest country in history, the United States of America."[3]

Aristotle, it should be pointed out, was not a consistent advocate or defender of political individualism; one can find in his writings a mixture of anti-statist and statist philosophy, but, by and large, he was inclined toward the individual and toward a suspicion of the consuming power of the government. He seems to have inherited more from the spirit of Socrates--who was a consistent individualist--than he did from the spirit of Plato.

It was Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) who reintroduced Aristotelianism into European thought; this was toward the end of the Middle Ages when the Age of Reason was waiting, impatiently, just over the horizon. The Renaissance (14th-16th centuries) projected Aquinas's rationalism and individualism further: the questioning of the Church's authority, the breaking up of feudal castes, the growth of explorations and inventions, and a burst of scientific activities--all this set the stage for a great surge of reason, which culminated with the 18th century Enlightenment. The mind--and individual potential--was extolled, and rationalism was considered once again a virtue, a healthy departure from the superstition and mysticism of earlier times. This new philosophic force--the spirit of Aristotle--virtually ended with the conclusion of the 18th century, although remnants of it carried over into the 19th century. And some of it is still with us.

The 18th century saw the Aristotelian spirit at its peak. Philosophers of this century felt they lived in the best of times and worlds; nature seemed good and people rational. There was optimism, and progress seemed inevitable. Reason, during this century, was definitely on the throne; occultism and emotionalism cowered in the few remaining shadows. And what was this Reason which was so beloved in the 18th century? Peikoff has written that it "is a faculty which acquires knowledge on the basis of the evidence of the senses....a faculty which, properly employed, can discover explanatory principles in every field and achieve certainty in regard to them."[4]

This rationalistic, optimistic age was soon to come under mounting pressures: the French Revolution, which should have brought the overthrow of tyranny, but did not, and the Industrial Revolution which, rather than bringing peace and abundance, led to a ruination of the cities and increased misery for the masses. And one other destructive factor to the Aristotelian spirit must be mentioned: Immanuel Kant, in the second half of the 18th century. Kant desired to limit scientific knowledge so as to make room for a more Platonist "faith" or feeling; through Kant the emphasis of "realism" would be changing to "idealism." He abandoned the view that minds are basically passive contemplators of independently existing objects, maintaining that objects are "constructs in the activity of minds."[5]

Although the spirit of the Age of Reason did not last very long in the overall sweep of history, it did have a powerful

impact. If nothing else, it reached into the early American colonies and into the newly created American nation. It influenced Franklin, Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, Jay and others--Enlightenment men who valued rationalism and individualism--and most important of all for the press--freedom of expression. Leaving these American Aristotelians for the moment, let us look at some of the perspectives on freedom that were prominent in Europe during the Age of Reason.

Freedom in the Age of Reason

Although there had been voices of freedom crying in many autocratic wildernesses through the centuries, it was not until the dawn of the Age of Reason in Europe that full appreciation was given to the concept of freedom by a majority of serious thinkers. And this concern with freedom did not remain on an intellectual level, but spilled over into economics, politics, and the general social domain.

The Age of Reason was divided into two main branches--one the British Enlightenment and the other the French Enlightenment. And they were different in many respects; for instance, the British branch (e.g., Locke, Hume, Adam Smith) stressed liberty often at the expense of virtue, while the French branch (e.g., Voltaire, Diderot, Condorcet) tended to trade off liberty for the sake of virtue. Also it can be said that the English philosophers were more "mundane" or pragmatic, while the French were more "intellectual"--railing out against things as they

"might ideally be."[6] Both camps, however, were rationalists. They had begun to shy away from the earlier mystical, spiritual, occultist, and intuitive varieties of idealism and were now stressing the importance of the mind, of Reason, in understanding the world around them.

Since the British were staunch supporters of freedom, let us turn first to them. Perhaps the earliest of the great documents which pointed out the value of freedom of expression was John Milton's Areopagitica (1664). In it he proposed his well-known "self-righting principle" which has stood through the centuries as a justification for a free press system--at least as it is understood under capitalism. The tract was based on the assumption that men have reason and are wise enough to know right from wrong, good from bad. This being the case, men should be free from government control of their expression. Unless they have free choice in their communication activities, people cannot fully exercise their reason. Milton believed that, given a 'free and open encounter,' truth will defeat error. This is the core of Milton's "self-righting principle" which still holds in the mass consciousness of the West, although it is questioned often by individual intellectuals.

As a forerunner of the American concept of "a free marketplace of ideas" made popular by Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes in 1919, Milton's "self-righting" idea is expressed in these familiar words:

....And though all the winds of doctrine

> were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licensing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple: who ever knew truth put to worse in a free and open encounter....

In spite of the dignity and appeal of such a statement, many journalists and other intellectuals who think about such things today are not so certain of its validity. Truth, indeed, may be "in the field" (and often even that is doubted), but there are many people who are skeptical about truth winning out after grappling with falsehood. Truth is too elusive a concept for Milton's words to stand a very close scrutiny. Even so, Milton played a very important part in the development of free expression in the early 17th century when such ideas were truly revolutionary.

Then came John Locke (1632-1704), who is generally considered the leading philosopher of the Enlightenment and the father of classical liberalism. His thought set the tone for the Enlightenment philosophers who followed. It was Locke, by and large, who had the greatest influence on the later development of the American republic. And, as Peikoff points out, "the political philosophy which Locke passed on to the American Founding Fathers gave rise to America's distinctive institutions."[7]

Liberty was very important to Locke. He saw it as a natural

right, one that should not be abridged except when it might interfere with the liberty of another. He also saw government as being a creation of, and servant of, the people. Locke believed that power was given freely to government by the people, not surrendered by them, as Hobbes had maintained. The idea of majority rule and governmental responsibility to the people, so important in the new American government, was largely borrowed from Locke. There is little doubt of the great influence of Locke on such thinkers as Jefferson and Paine in America and Rousseau and Montesquieu in France.

Locke also stressed the sanctity of the individual, the rule of law, checks and balances in government, the rule of reason in human affairs, and a belief that the mind is capable of finding the truth. He saw the need for maximum freedom for the individual if the mind were to be able to do its proper work. While Locke was enthroning Reason, there were important figures, like George Berkeley (1685-1753), who were planting seeds of mysticism in the philosophical fields. Berkeley was opposed to Locke's epistemology which separated ideas from things. For Berkeley, the only things that were real were ideas. So the seeds of "idealism" were planted, and they would grow well in the 19th and 20th centuries.

A danger sign for the Enlightenment emphasis on freedom was also appearing in France. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was talking about liberty (coining the slogan "liberty, fraternity, and equality"), while at the same time setting the stage for the

terrorism of the French Revolution and the coming of tyranny to the country. According to Bertrand Russell, Rousseau was the father of the romantic movement and precursor of modern authoritarianism: he led to Hitler, whereas Locke led to Franklin Rossevelt and Winston Churchill.[8] For, in spite of Rousseau's basic affinity for freedom, he came to the position that each person, for everyone's sake, must give up freedom and power to the state; the collective will must be obeyed. This French "democrat" would turn the clock back to Plato, with the Collective Will taking the place of the Philosopher King.

Unlike Plato, however, Rousseau was an egalitarian--probably the foremost in the history of political thought. For him, the social contract is overriding. There must be "the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community."[9] He saw individuals as parts of the corporate whole, conforming to the general will. And, as to freedom, he actually defined it as "absolute power": a kind of forced obedience and conformity with the whole--not liberty of <u>individuals</u>, but liberty of the corporate body.[10] It is easy to see how Rousseau had great influence on authoritarians of all types--from a Hitler to a Stalin--and how, especially, his concept of "freedom" (as corporate freedom) is reflected in contemporary Marxist societies like the Soviet Union. It may also be noted that present-day "press freedom" in the United States has vestiges of Rousseau's thought: the newspaper, for example--the corporate entity, not the individual journalist--

has the freedom.

Many philosophers of the 18th century added their concepts to the idea of freedom. David Hume (1711-1766) defined freedom in a way so as to approximate the later idea of "positive" and "negative" freedom: it was an all-emcompassing concept which saw liberty as "a power of acting or not acting according to the determinations of the will." Hume believed that the essence of freedom is this: "If we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may."[11]

Some voices speaking of freedom were even stronger. Lord Acton, for instance, saw freedom as an end in itself, not merely as a means to an end. He said: "Now liberty and good government do not exclude each other; and there are excellent reasons why they should go together. Liberty is not a means to a higher political end. It is itself the highest political end."[12] However, the philosophers of the 18th century Enlightenment--even in Britain where liberty was stressed--did not conceive of freedom as absolute; they realized that reason dictated moderation in its use. Listen to Edmund Burke: "The extreme of liberty (which is its abstract perfection, but its real fault) obtains nowhere, nor ought to obtain anywhere....Liberty must be limited to be possessed."[13]

Beginning early in the 19th century, freedom of expression and the press began to be stressed by many philosophers. Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) in England was acknowledging that the liberty of the press had its "inconveniences," but went on to say that

the "evils which result from it are not to be compared to those of a censorship."[14] Censorship was terrible to Bentham, and he called it "nothing less than the danger of stopping the whole progress of human kind in all its paths."[15]

In Germany, Georg Hegel (1770-1831) was talking of freedom. This preeminent philosopher of the 19th century saw individual freedom going through stages or changing throughout history; this, of course, was consistent with his philosophy of becoming, of growth, of progress. He shows how freedom diminishes through history: first (in its youth) was the dominance of one individual; then there was a second stage (adolescence) where "individualities" were forming themselves, and then a third stage (old age) which saw social aims absorbing all individual aims.[16] Evidently, we are still in this third stage--this collectivist mode--where social objectives are superior to individual freedom. When this stage will end we do not know; when, if ever, the dialectic will push us into another stage and what the nature of such a stage will be, we are not told. But for Hegel, this historical process does not stop and we can expect further developments in the "dialectic of freedom."

At the time Hegel was writing, he saw individual rights (of which freedom is one) as not being pitted against the state--"rather, the conscious, accepting participation in the stage." Rousseau would have understood this. This Hegelian concept of freedom and the importance of the state (and the individual's partipation in the state) moved directly to the 19th and 20th

centuries as diverse systems of military nationalism, Marxist-Leninist socialism, National Socialism of Hitler and Mussolini.[17] So it can easily be seen how "left" and "right" Hegelians, representing so-called liberal and conservative thought, drew on Hegel for their ideas on the freedom of the individual vis-a-vis the state.

Offsetting the incipient statism of Hegel, Alexis de Tocqueville enters the scene. A Frenchman, whose Democracy in America is one of the most perceptive analyses of America ever written, spoke of freedom in glowing terms and championed the individual against the state. Writing of press freedom and government, he said: "The sovereignty of the people and the liberty of the press may . . . be regarded as correlative, just as the censorship of the press and universal suffrage are two things which are irreconcilably opposed and which cannot long be retained among the institutions of the same people."[18]

Tocqueville believed that freedom produces a recognition of the importance of individualism. He writes that it gives people "an exalted idea of their own individual value, and a passionate love of independence." It also provides people with "extraordinary energy and ardour to their pursuit of their own interests and passions." Individual freedom, according to Tocqueville, has led to extraordinary actions, and adopted by an entire people, "it has created the most energetic nations that have ever existed."[19]

Back in England was the utilitarian philosopher, John Stuart

Mill (1806-1873), who is counted as among the greatest champions of freedom--especially freedom of expression. Mill, however, was not as convinced of the absolute nature of free expression as was Locke. If such expression causes social harm, believed Mill, it should be circumscribed. Whereas Locke had seen freedom of the press as a God-given natural right, Mill saw it in utilitarian terms: what it could do in bringing about happiness or good in a society.

In his famous essay "On Liberty," He wrote: "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind." He gave these basic reasons for his opinion: (a) We may silence the truth if we silence an opinion, (b) Even a wrong opinion may contain some truth, (c) All opinions are needed so we can test and defend our own opinions, and (d) There is need to challenge a commonly held opinion from time to time so that it will not lose its vitality.[20]

Mill believed that truth, if it has a fair chance, always triumps over error in the end (reminiscent of Milton). This position of Mill's was not too well planted in his mind, for we find that another time he called the "self-righting" process of Milton "one of those pleasant falsehoods whiich are repeated until they are taken for granted, but which all experience tends to repudiate."[21] At any rate, we do know that Mill valued free discussion; it was essential for good government. In fact, Mill

believed it "equal in value to good government, because without it good government cannot exist."[22]

No universalist in his advocacy of freedom, Mill felt that his freedom principle was appropriate only in societies of relatively high educational standards where people could rationally exercise such freedom. He did not project his freedom concept to everyone. For example, he would exclude from his freedom principle all "backward states of society." For people of such states, Mill says, despotism would remain necessary until such time as social evolution would bring these people to the level of modern Western civilization. Freedom, for Mill, was simply for those who could use it for the expanding of happiness and social good. It was, in short, a utilitarian instrument.[23] So we can see that John Stuart Mill was not really the freedom absolutist he is often said to be.

According to Albert W. Levi, Mill's concept of freedom goes beyond both a Lockean theory of natural rights and a Benthamite theory of social utility. It is really a return to Aristotle, insisting that freedom is at once a natural right and an absolute requirement for a person to become fully actualized. Only through freedom's exercise, believed Mill, can a person attain rational and moral perfection.[24] Levi sees Mill's stress on self-realization and pluralism of messages as evidence of an orientation that is at least partly Aristotelian. Mill was concerned with reasoning, judgment, observtions, and purposive choice; and, says Levi, "the spirit of his concepts might well be

a digest of the related parts of the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle." Adds Levi, these ideas also sound very existentialist, at least "in the Heideggerian sense."[25]

Fourteen years after Mill's "On Liberty" was published, Fitzjames Stephen, whose Liberty, Equality, Fraternity[26] has proved to be the most potent critique directed at Mill, made it clear that an individual cannot exercise freedom in a vacuum, but must consider freedom as it relates to others. He believed Mill stressed too much an individualistic ethics, which was somewhat strange in light of Mill's utilitarianism, and should have given more attention to personal interaction.[27]

In responding to Mill's belief in the "goodness" of freedom, Stephen says that the question of whether it is good or bad is as "irrational as the question whether fire is a good or a bad thing." Says Stephen: It is both good and bad according to time, place, and circumstance. Compared to Mill, Stephen takes a far more cautious or moderate view of freedom. His concept of freedom avoids any kinds of absolutes and veers toward a position which would take into consideration responsibility or ethics in the use of freedom. He wrote that we "must proceed in a . . . cautious way, and confine ourselves to such remarks as experience suggests about the advantages and disadvantages of compulsion and liberty respectively in particular cases."[28]

In spite of Stephen's important critique of "On Liberty," Mill's basic tenets have been very influential and are generally accepted by journalists to this day--at least in the West. This

does not mean, as is often pointed out, that everyone (especially government) puts the Millian philosophy into practice. Probably the greatest restraint on liberty, as many contemporary analysts are pointing out, is the incresing strictures on the free flow of information, on secrecy and information management. Listen to Harold Evans, once a well-known London editor who is now living in the United States:

> Every word of what Mill said stands today but the modern press cannot survive or achieve full freedom simply by arguing from the classical virtues of free speech. There will not be a murmur of dissent about John Stuart Mill from men and women who daily, in government, law, and all centres of power restrict the flow of information or stamp 'confidential' on the documents. They believe in freedom of speech as passionately as any journalist. What they have not perceived or been convinced of is that only with the freest flow of facts is freedom of opinion of much value.[29]

Having looked at some of the European Enlightenment perspectives on freedom, let us now turn to the new American nation and the reflections of European thought that infused the minds of the Founding Fathers with a love of reason, individualism, and freedom. The spirit of America was exemplified by disciples of John Locke, Edmund Burke, and others

of the Enlightenment--mainly those from England. When one looks at such writings as are found in The Federalist (by Hamilton, Madison, and Jay) and other writings of the Founding Fathers, it is easy to see the impact of the Enlightenment thought.

Early American Voices

The Enlightenment spirit that swept into America in the 18th century, as we have noted earlier, was essentially an Aristotelian one. On many issues Aristotle differed from these 18th century philosophers, but in a broad way his thought was the Enlightenment thought. Enthroned were the sovereignty of secular reason, the rejection of idealistic epistemology, the reality of particulars and of individuals, the lawfulness of nature, the nonsupernaturalist affimation of certainty, the belief in objectivity and absolutes, the positive view of man's potential, and the value of intellectual development and self-fulfillment and personal happiness. As Leonard Peikoff has shown so effectively, the very core of the Enlightenment spirit was Aristotelian.[30]

America's Founding Fathers were thinkers. They were well-educated, articulate, and imbued with the basic ideas of individualism, reason, and freedom. James Franklin, for instance, gave great stress to the Miltonic notion that controversy must be made public, that it was necessary for the self-righting process to take place so that truth and falsehood should fight it out in the public print. His brother, Benjamin,

also proposed a free-encounter of information in the marketplace. But he, like so many others, saw limits to freedom--for instance, he would not approve printing anything which might offend the Church or State, another reflection of Miltonic thought. Benjamin Franklin was one of the first to see the dilemma of a capitalistic press system, the paradox of public service versus private profit. He was concerned, but offered no real answers.[31]

John Randolph of Virginia, espousing an aristocratic philosophy, spent his public career as a leader of the opposition to both Jeffersonians and Federalists. He was an ardent supporter of states rights and a lover of liberty. For Randolph, a devotion to freedom meant that the concept (especially as used by French Enlightenment writers) of equality was unrealistic. He said at one point: "I love liberty; I hate equality." And there was George Hay, another Virginian, who under the pseudonym of "Hortensius," wrote perhaps the strongest polemic in defense of press freedom in early America. In An Essay on Liberty of the Press, published in 1799, Hay came out for total exemption of the press from any kind of legislative control. In this absolutist doctrine of press freedom, Hay advocated the press's "printing any thing without controul."[32]

And Alexander Hamilton, although he argued against a Bill of Rights for the American Constitution under the pen-name "Publius," was a staunch believer in free expression. He saw no reason to put into the Bill of Rights anything about press

freedom unless such a freedom was defined.[33] How could something be protected unless we know what that something is? This was Hamilton's question--a question which has challenged us ever since.

Thomas Jefferson believed that human beings were rational and were perfectable; but this perfectability was contingent on being exposed to a wide variety of information and ideas. In this belief he drew heavily on Milton, Locke, and Mill. A more modern view has been proposed by J. Bronowski who believes that a pluralism of information and viewpoints does help individuals and society adapt to the future, but he is dubious about such a diversity resulting in the people finding the truth.[34] Jefferson surely would not have taken issue with Bronowski's view since he would see it as self-evident. Said another way, people must have a diversity of information to adapt, and, as Hegel and many others have pointed out, when one adapts, it is always "to the future." One cannot adapt to the past, and the present is the past as soon as one tries to adapt to it.

Like Milton, Mill, and others who have valued press freedom, Jefferson would put strings on it. He believed, for example, that the press had an obligation to provide dependable, accurate, and comprehensive news and opinion. He believed that, if the press failed in its responsibility, the people (or society) should--as the ultimate check on the press--force the press into a more responsible mode.[35] Jefferson had a "responsible" view of press freedom. Liberty, he believed, was not doing as you

please, but rather doing as you ought. This, of course, is a limited view of freedom, but it is a socially responsible one, the nature of which is motivated by ethics and not by personal or institutional whim.

Jefferson had the highest respect for the theory of a free press, but his respect for the actual press was often less than substantial. He obviously thought newspapers were essential, but he believed that to do their job correctly in a democracy everyone should be exposed to them--as he put it, "every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them."[36] So we see that Jefferson qualified his well-known statement [about his preferring newspapers without a government to government without newspapers] to such a degree that he ended up saying almost nothing. In other words, there really would be no possibility for him to have newspapers without a government. In the first place, even if we could get a society in which every person could read, the main problem would still face us: How would we see to it that every person would receive newspapers or be able to read them?

Professor Robert Logan of the University of Missouri, in 1985, made the interesting point that the establishment of news councils was an outgrowth of Jefferson's insistence that the people keep the press under control.[37] Logan, writing about the now-defunct National News Council, says that this council "followed most of the Hutchins Commission's conceptual underpinnings to the letter," and that "Jefferson's social

libertarian perspectives and the NNC's rationales, that is, remain remarkably similar."[38] So, it could well be that Jefferson's press philosophy, which Logan astutely calls "social libertarian," contained the seed which burst forth right after World War II in what is now called the "social responsibility" theory of the press.

Turning to James Madison, another Founding Father, we see that he had a different concept of press freedom. He did not have a strong belief in the people's desire to seek the truth, feeling as did Benjamin Franklin that the people sought mainly to reinforce their own beliefs and to seek the company of those who shared these beliefs. This position has as its epicenter groups of like-minded people, called "factions" by Madison. Such factions would seek social control, even at the expense of other freedoms, to maintain their own value systems. Madison was thus led to a different view of press freedom and journalism's role in society. He would have the press provide accurate, comprehensive information, but he believed the factions would impact the press for factional advantage. So the press was in a sense in an adversarial relationship--not just with government, but with a multitude of factions (constituencies) in the society.[39]

The primary responsibility of the press, according to Madison, was that it keep its independence from any outside interference. The press should be free to be "responsible" or "irresponsible." There would obviously be press abuse; Madison put it this way: "Some degree of abuse is inseparable from the

proper use of everything; and in no instance is this more true, than in that of the press."[40] Freedom was the ultimate responsibility. So we can see that it was really Madison, not Jefferson, who was the radical libertarian among the Founding Fathers. Madison did prize pluralism--factions checking on one another. Press pluralism, which we hear so much about these days, really got into the lexicon of journalism from this Madisonian emphasis.[41] It should be noted that the concept of "objectivity," so prominent in press discussions today, did not even come up in the thinking of the Founding Fathers.

Many other early American leaders could be quoted here, but the ones we have heard from exemplify well the Enlightenment overtones of freedom and reason which got our republic underway. It can be seen that even at this early time, the concept of moderation, of social responsibility, and a concern with ethics was being injected into the discourse on freedom. Let us now turn to some more modern American voices to see how these Enlightenment ideas have been diffused ever further.

Recent American Voices

Everybody has an opinion about freedom. And, since the United States still enjoys a great amount of it, these opinions are heard on every hand. Usually statements and discussions of freedom relate to freedom of expression, since political freedom

is generally considered settled, or largely so. Very few articles or books on journalism are written today without some attention given to press freedom. There will be no attempt here to present American opinions on press freedom exhaustively, but a few will be provided as typical of the range of concern on this subject.

The reader will note that, by and large, recent American voices speaking on press freedom (and freedom generally) are little more than footnotes to the classic statements which have been made by European and early American spokesmen of the Age of Reason. It is difficult to say much more about the subject than was said by Locke, Voltaire, Mill, Burke, Madison, and Jefferson. But the subject of freedom still possesses modern intellectuals; and, especially in the area of speech and the press, concern with freedom is continuous and arguments endless. Let us briefly look at some of this concern.

Edmund Lambeth, a professor of journalism, in Committed Journalism (1986), pays tribute to liberty as "an indispensable element in the idea of justice." In a couple of pages, Lambeth summarizes the importance of freedom to American journalists, and quotes the ethical code of the ASNE [American Society of Newspaper Editors] as saying that "freedom of the press belongs to the people."[42] Beyond this debatable point, Lambeth quotes Warren Breed, a sociologist who studied the workings of the newsroom in depth, as showing how reporters may lose "their potential as moral agents by a socialization process in which the

reporter is taught to accept newsroom policies inimical to wider public needs."[43] The idea of freedom loss by the individual journalist within the organization is an interesting one and has received very little attention in American journalism; most of the emphasis has been on freedom of the media from government and not on freedom of the individual journalist from social control in the workplace.

Robert H. Bork, professor of law at Yale, warns that journalists should look at press freedom as a "problem" and not just as a right. He implies that freedom may actually be lost unless journalists use freedom more wisely and responsibly. Here is what he says:

> If they [journalists] would preserve their freedoms, the members of the press might do well to realize that freedom is not merely a right, it is also a problem. Increasingly the press is perceived by many people as being a center of irresponsible power.[44]

Mortimer Adler, a popular contemporary philosopher, believes in limited freedom, a freedom which is marked by moral concern. He speaks of acquired freedom, calling it a "moral freedom" -- or "having a will habitually disposed by virtue to seek what it ought." This is the type of freedom, says Adler, associated with wisdom and moral virtue; it is possessed only by those who, in

the course of their personal development, "have acquired some measure of virtue and wisdom."[45] This acquired freedom is, for Adler, a kind of freedom to act virtuously. So we see that Adler, like Jefferson, Milton and others--would place limitations on freedom. Adler mentions two other types of freedom: "natural" freedom--freedom inherent in human nature, freedom we are born with, and "circumstantial" freedom--freedom that varies with circumstances, from to time and place to place, depending on whether the circumstances are favorable or unfavorable to its exercise.[46]

John Dewey, one of modern American's leading philosophers, views freedom mainly in instrumental terms--an opportunity for the person to grow, to change, and to adapt better to society's expectations. Freedom, to Dewey, is "liberation, emancipation; the possession and active manifestation of...self-determination in action...." Dewey goes on to say that freedom "is connected with possibility of growth, learning and modification of character."[47]

Russell Kirk, one of America's leading conservative spokesmen, confronts the changing nature of liberalism and the "liberal." He sees the contemporary liberal as quite different from the liberals of the 18th and 19th centuries with their love for individual freedom and their rebellion against government controls. Today's liberals, he says, have come to endorse substantial supervision and government interference in society. Many of the concepts and ideas which Lockean liberals stood for,

according to Kirk, are now championed by people who call themselves "conservatives"--people who are trying to conserve the spirit of the Age of Reason.[48]

Many persons feel that the First Amendment should provide freedom to broadcast media as well as to the print media in America. This has long been a bone of contention for, as some point out, if the principle of press freedom is valid for the print media, it should be equally valid for the broadcast media. Bill Monroe, of NBC News, is one who has made a strong plea for First Amendment "protection" for broadcasters. Speaking at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., Monroe seems to place the politicians in the seat of the villain in regard to the fact that broadcasting is not really free. He says:

> The politicians would very much like to get some leverage over the print media if they could, because they can make it easier for themselves by writing their own rules as to how journalists cover politics. They are trying to do this, and to some extent they have done it for the broadcast media.[49]

Professor Murray Rothbard, writing from an anarchistic or radical libertarian perspective, agrees with Monroe about broadcasting's lack of freedom, and in the following words deals with the current condition of broadcasting in the United States:

> There is one important area of American life where no effective freedom of speech or the press does or can exist under the present system. That is the entire field of radio and television....The federal government, as the licensor of the airwaves, asserts the right and the power to regulate the stations minutely and continuously. Thus, over the head of each station is the club of the threat of nonrenewal, or even suspension, of its license. In consequence, the idea of freedom of speech in radio and television is no more than a mockery.[50]

From another radical libertarian, Jerome Tuccille, we hear that radical libertarians and anarchists see left-wing liberals and right-wing conservatives as fundamentally authoritarians. According to Tuccille, they are both "statist" in their essentials. "As long as liberals speak of using the power of the state to 'make men free,' and conservatives speak in terms of police power to preserve the 'moral climate of the nation,' both sides will be locked in an endless tug of war to elect their own authoritarians into office and suppress the opposition."[51]

Tuccille has called freedom the catalyst to a truly open society--"where each individual is free to act in accordance with his own rational self-determination as a self-owned entity."[52]

But he sees the climate of freedom being destroyed as the American heritage "is being trampled by an army of bureaucratic politicians who have been nurtured in the miasma of a philosophical swampland." He adds that relativistic values "have replaced absolutes; relativistic ethical codes have displaced moral conviction; pragmatism has displaced objective reasoning as the motive power for human activity."[53]

One may think that Tuccille and other anarchists are extreme in their proposals for lessening government; some would even say they are dangerous. But such radical proposals are common in the United States, and indicate in a pragmatic way the high respect for freedom (at least its "negative" variety) which still infects the citizenry of the country. As economist Milton Friedman has said: "One feature of a free society is surely the freedom of individuals to advocate and propagandize openly for a radical change in the structure of society--so long as the advocacy is restricted to persuasion and does not include force or other forms of coercion."[54]

Robert Nozick, a Harvard philosopher, like Tuccille, takes a strong stand in favor of maximum freedom--for the individual as well as for the institution of the press. Certainly in respect to government interference in press affairs, he takes a radical libertarian view: government should keep hands off entirely. Nozick believes in a "night-watchman" role for the state, whereby the state would only interfere in social affairs as a protector of the safety and freedoms of the people. Nozick, like most

libertarians, believes that freedom and any kind of forced redistribution of the wealth--to say nothing of complete equality--are in radical opposition.[55]

Herbert Marcuse, a Marxist philosopher in California, has presented a formidable argument that free choice is not necessarily a good thing, and what is chosen is more important than simply have a wide range of choices. He would seem to oppose, therefore, the capitalist world's priority given to a pluralistic information system. For Marcuse, if public officials are authorities, it makes little difference that they are freely elected or chosen. He also puts much emphasis on the types and quality of goods and services provided in a pluralistic system, and he deemphasizes the importance of their mere availability and the possibility of being chosen.[56]

John Phelan, philosopher and communications professor, says that Isaiah Berlin's distinction between positive and negative freedom is useful. Positive freedom, for Berlin, is an inner spiritual reality. It is the capacity to choose "the better thing, at times the best thing, according to some moral vision or religious ideal." It is the freedom to want what one should. Herbert Marcuse would most likely agree wholeheartedly with such a concept. On the other hand, negative freedom is simply the absence of external constraints on our behavior. One may, while restrained outwardly, have positive freedom; for instance Mahatma Gandhi, in jail, enjoyed a high degree of positive freedom even while he was deprived of negative freedom.[57] Berlin believes

that positive freedom is the more noble concept. Negative freedom is merely a condition which can come to good only if positive freedom is also present.[58]

Phelan notes a danger in positive freedom: The censor extols it, for it provides a rationale for censorship. The censor wishes the state to guide citizens "to want what they should by shielding them from temptations to want what they should not."[59] Positive freedom does emphasize what one should do with freedom, whereas negative freedom simply protects one from restrictions that would prevent self-determination of what will be done--good or bad. The proponent of negative freedom would maintain that one who is free of restraints is free to do anything or nothing--or even to do something considered irresponsible.

Clifford Christians, a professor of communications and a specialist in press ethics, feels that too much attention is given to the press's freedom and not nearly enough to the press's responsibility. It is his desire that ethics be woven more thoroughly into the fabric of the press. He details the slogans which extol freedom, and them makes these interesting observations:

> And in an environment where freedom is prized above all, accountability is not often understood clearly. Accounting, properly requested and unreservedly given, is alien territory. The belief in a free press is sincerely held and of critical

> importance. Yet it often plays tricks on the press' thinking about ethics. Ethical principles concerning obligations and reckoning do not find a natural home within a journalism hewn from the rock of negative freedom.[60]

Professor Christians expresses a reasoned suspicion of freedom--especially of the "negative" kind. His insistence on more ethical concern in journalism--the tempering of freedom with virtue--exemplifies the increasing concern in America for an ethical dimension in any discussion of press freedom.

Herbert Read points out that "freedom of the press" has an unfortunate meaning in the United States (or in the West generally), where it is seen as "really a negative condition--the absence of control, the liberty of unlicensed conduct." Read prefers to use freedom in a positive sense--"specifically, freedom to create, freedom to become what one <u>is</u>." Read does admit that the positive freedom concept implies an obligation on the part of the actor, for such freedom is not seen as a "state of rest," but rather a "state of action, of projection, of self-realization." If this is the case, then, it is obvious that a person is obligated (under "positive" freedom) to do something positively; there is no room for inaction or for action which actually does damage to oneself or to others.[61]

John Hollowell, in a book on Plato, tends to support Read's predilection for positive freedom, seeing negative freedom as being no more than license. Positive freedom, says Hollowell,

would be service to God and to one's fellow-men. The other kind of freedom (negative) would grant a person power to do what one wants. According to Hollowell, this negative brand is not really freedom at all.[62]

Howard Zinn, a professor of government, notes that freedom of expression is available to everyone in America, but in widely varying degrees. He stresses that certain realities of wealth, power, and status "stand in the way of the equal distribution of these rights." A rich person, he says, simply has more freedom of expression than a poor person, and the government has more than a private individual because government officials can command more attention via the airwaves and major newspapers. Freedom of the press, says Zinn, is guaranteed to all by the First Amendment--a debatable proposition. But there are problems with this guarantee, he says, and continues:

> Anyone with ten thousand dollars can put out a newspaper to reach a few thousand people. Any one with ten million dollars can buy a few newspapers that will reach a few million people. Anyone who is penniless had better have a loud voice; and then he might be arrested for disturbing the peace.[63]

Conclusion

This quick survey of press freedom from the 18th century to the present has, of course, neglected many perspectives--

especially non-Western ones--which are interesting and important. But this brief journey has concentrated on the spirit of European freedom which have, since the Age of Reason, blown over the Western world. We have seen that even from the very early days of Western civilization, where the individualist spirit of Aristotle merged with the more collectivist spirit of Plato, the tendency among intellectuals generally has been toward a moderate view of freedom. Freedom, tempered with a social concern and a respect for responsibility and even accountability, is becoming ever more the emphasis of Western journalism.

Positive freedom naturally has become more important as the concept of the ethical use of freedom has come to the forefront of journalistic dialogue. Negative freedom, of course, is still important, but it appears to be looked upon generally as a concept, a sterile kind of freedom, that is not positive, progressive, and self-assertive in a socially concerned way. Jefferson, not Madison, appears to be the prophet of the present and the future of American journalism. The "freedom to be irresponsible" is receding in serious Western journalistic thought; Madison's contentiousness of factions is giving way to a kind of cooperationist spirit and social harmony in the use of journalistic freedom.

With all these developments in the conceptual understanding of freedom of expression, Aristotle seems to still be the spiritual guru. He still stands as a rational force, a stalwart of personal self-realization, and a lover of freedom (even

negative freedom)--just as he did during the European Enlightenment. But his "social side" is getting more exposure these days: a concern for moderation, for the feelings and welfare of others, and the expectation that each person will fulfill his or her potential. This is, in short, the essence of the concept of "positive freedom" which many contemporary spokespersons are stressing today. Aristotle is still with us, and contemporary journalism--which has lost so much respect and credibility with the public--needs him very much.

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